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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 UNVIE VIENNA 000117

SIPDIS

INL FOR TOM WILLIAMS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2023

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [EAID](#) [IR](#) [PK](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: UNODC OFFICIALS DISCUSS PROGRESS IN AF-PAK AND
IRAN PROGRAMS, REITERATE DIALOGUE POSSIBILITIES WITH TEHRAN

REF: UNVIE VIENNA 00655

UNVIE VIEN 00000117 001.6 OF 006

Classified By: Ambassador Gregory L. Schulte for reasons 1.4 (c) and (e)
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11. (C) Summary. On March 18, INL/PA Director of the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Program Tom Williams met with UNODC officials to discuss counternarcotics issues in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, and to gain insight into UNODC's program plans and needs in the coming year. UNODC officials were uniformly enthusiastic about responding to Williams' request to identify new concrete actions that could be taken to promote border security and counternarcotics cooperation. On Iran, Technical Cooperation Section Chief Roberto Arbitrio argued that UNODC was an effective facilitator of dialogue with Iran and warned that decreases in funding for 2010 might put that role at risk. He believes that drug control might be a good place to start a bilateral conversation with Tehran because Iran is a "good guy" on this issue, it would allow "peer to peer" engagement, and it is an issue on which Iran has a real role to play, but cautioned that even their own dialogue with Iran has ups and downs in terms of Iran's level of cooperation. However, Iran is showing signs that it has a real interest in dialogue on this issue and has stepped up cooperation in response to the change in U.S. administration. This additional cooperation, in Arbitrio's opinion, led to the successful joint counternarcotics operation carried out by Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan on March 8. Interlocutors on Pakistan argued that they, too, were disappointed about UNODC's downgrading of its office in Pakistan, but noted that they were forced to do by a lack of general funds. They also identified capacity building needs in Pakistan. On March 19, Arbitrio requested that USG officials repeat to Executive Director Costa and other high-ranking UNODC officials Williams' request for UNODC's thoughts on concrete future actions in order to decide where the U.S. is best able to and interested in contributing. End Summary.

12. (C) On March 18, INL/PA Director of the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Program Tom Williams met with UNODC officials to discuss counternarcotics issues in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, and to gain insight into UNODC's program plans and needs in the coming year. He conveyed USG interest in UNODC's assessment about how counterdrug initiatives are faring in the three countries and asked about what is needed to promote better regional cooperation on counternarcotics and border security.

13. (C) Paris Pact Coordinator Antonino De Leo briefed on progress being made under the Rainbow Strategy. Williams encouraged De Leo to convey the specific capacity-building needs for Afghanistan broadly to the international community. De Leo took this as an action item and is working to identify short-, medium-, and long-term requirements for capacity building. He will work to add to this list at a meeting in Kabul scheduled to take place after the Afghan elections. De Leo also noted that they are contemplating additional projects for Iran and that Tehran has asked them to broker new initiatives. He argued that Iran is interested because through these projects, Iran can have an impact on the future of Afghanistan. Iran is already working to finish up a training center that can contribute to Pakistan and Afghanistan's ability to improve their counternarcotics efforts as they do better on capacity building. Iran's expertise on prevention is also broadly beneficial, he argued, noting that 14 delegations from Asia and Africa are traveling to Iran to learn about its prevention and treatment initiatives. This is a place where more external funding would be welcome. He also noted that, although he understands international concerns about giving Iran dual-use equipment for their counternarcotics forces, Iran does need the requested items. Iran has demonstrated that it will focus its efforts on counternarcotics efforts-it increases its drug control budget every year and is improving its legal capacity to deal with the drug problem, for instance by passing a money laundering law. Although this law is not perfect, De Leo argued, it is an important step in the right direction.

UNVIE VIEN 00000117 002.2 OF 006

14. (C) Separately, Technical Cooperation Section Chief Roberto Arbitrio, who recently returned from several years as head of UNODC's office in Tehran, described UNODC's coordination role in Iran and how it filters this information back to the U.S. He believes that drug control might be a good place to start a bilateral conversation with Tehran because Iran is a "good guy" on this issue, it would allow "peer to peer" engagement, and it is an issue on which Iran has a real role to play. He cautioned that even UNODC's own dialogue with Iran has ups and downs in terms of Iran's level of cooperation. For instance, cooperation waned when tension on the nuclear issue increased and after the election of Ahmadinejad. It is also clear that Iran has a "double agenda." It is taking steps forward on regional efforts for drug control while trying to use those steps for leverage. Nevertheless, there are signs that Iran is interested in dialogue. First, Iran is proving to be a good partner in the Triangular Initiative, and second, Iran has reengaged the Dublin Group. Arbitrio argued that Iranian counternarcotics chief Moghadam's meeting with the Dublin Group must have been approved by Ahmadinejad since Moghadam is a close advisor of the president. Iran is currently trying to organize a tour of its counternarcotics efforts on the border for the Dublin Group. (Note: This tour is likely to be similar to a tour Iran gave other diplomats in late 2008 as reported in ref A.) If there is a positive response to these moves, Tehran will continue to move forward, although we should expect a slow process because of the unwieldy and fragmented Iranian government decisionmaking process. However, if there is not a good response, Arbitrio would expect Iran to blame the U.S. and others for the problems in Afghanistan. Arbitrio also highlighted what he described as UNODC's "unique" leverage with Iran since it is one of the few UN organizations working in Iran and his ability to get meetings quickly and often with high-level Iranian officials, including from the police forces and the Majles. He noted that they do not have direct contacts with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and, in response to a question about whether the IRGC could be a spoiler in attempts to increase dialogue with Iran over

the counternarcotics issue, Arbitrio responded that he believes that given that both Ahmadinejad and Moghadam were in the IRGC, his consultations with them make sure that the IRGC is informed of UNODC and its activities. In any case, his current interlocutors could mobilize the IRGC for support if necessary. That said, he noted that clearance for interaction on drug control comes from both the Supreme Leader's office and the President's office, and if Khamenei sees risks in this dialogue, then Iran's level of cooperation will change.

Triangular Initiative Moving Forward

15. (C) Arbitrio described the Triangular Initiative as a step forward because UNODC can engage Iran regionally despite the ad hoc nature of the exercise. Arbitrio sees a change in Iran's commitment to the initiative that he believes was linked to the change in the U.S. administration. Iran was initially reluctant on the ground despite its original enthusiasm for the initiative, but more recently Tehran has started to take the lead in the Triangular Initiative. For example, UNODC tried to springboard off of a May 2008 meeting in Tehran to get increased cooperation on intelligence sharing, joint counternarcotics operations, and border control but with little luck despite Arbitrio calling 12 meetings to try to get movement on these issues in the months that followed. Then, after the change in U.S. administration, Tehran took action. They ran workshops, sponsored training, and made progress with the Joint Planning Cell (JPC), contributing space for the cell's headquarters and a full-time liaison officer, Colonel Masoud Rezvani, who was previously a drug liaison officer (DLO) in Pakistan for several years. Pakistan and Afghanistan only have part-time officers attached to the JPC, both of whom work in their respective embassies and have larger portfolios than drug control, although the Pakistani liaison is close to Anti-Narcotics Forces Chief General Jafari who "calls the shots in Pakistan." Arbitrio argued that an important future step will be to get full time liaison officers from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

UNVIE VIEN 00000117 003.2 OF 006

16. (C) De Leo said that UNODC set up three deliverables for the Triangular Initiative: the development of the JPC, to conduct operations based on intelligence, and to establish border liaison offices. He added that the goal is to dismantle drug networks and that they planned to create better mutual legal assistance that could, for instance, lead to extraditions. Although Iran is further ahead on border liaison offices (BLOs) than Pakistan and Afghanistan, more work is needed in all three countries, and UNODC does not currently have the funding to start BLOs on the Afghan side.

17. (C) Arbitrio told Msnoff on March 19 that many details of the JPC were set up during the second ministerial meeting of the Triangular Initiative in Iran. Both Iran and Pakistan were adamant that forces would not be allowed to cross into each others' territory. Arbitrio shared that Pakistan remains especially distrustful of Iran, and nearly two months ago, Iran threatened to cross into Pakistani territory to conduct an operation against Jundallah, to which Pakistan stridently objected. He argued that this event was part of what convinced Pakistan to take part in the March 8 joint operation, but that these fears are the biggest obstacle to future joint operations. Additionally, it was decided that the JPC would be the center for intelligence sharing and that the information would be shared only with the three states party to the Triangular Initiative. De Leo noted that Iran is ready to share intelligence on insurgents in Sistan va Baluchistan, but that if it did so, it would want to be able to follow the insurgents into Pakistani territory. In the context of this discussion, Afghanistan raised concerns that it would need to be able to share intelligence with outside

parties if necessary to carry out its commitments in a joint operation. Arbitrio noted that there was common understanding that Afghanistan might lack the capacity to follow through with its portion of a joint operation, thus no one raised objections.

18. (C) The first meeting of the JPC took place about a month ago and led to the first joint counternarcotics operation on March 8, the plan for which was completed on March 5. (Note: In response to Msnoff's question about Iranian press that described operations against Jundallah on March 7, Arbitrio emphasized that the counternarcotics operation took place only on March 8, starting at 0800 local time and that none of the countries had thus far mentioned a Jundallah angle.) Arbitrio noted that UNODC was involved in facilitating the involvement of all three states, but was not involved in the operational planning of the operation per the UN mandate. UNODC asked that operational plans not be shared with them before the operation, although they are now receiving briefings from each country on the details of the event. Although the operation did not seize the ton of narcotics that was set as a goal (or the amount Iran claimed in domestic press), it was still successful: the operation seized 473 kilograms of opium, 59 kilograms of heroin, and 98 kilograms of hashish, "dismantled" three criminal gangs, and resulted in the arrest of 16 people. Arbitrio said Iran reported that its counternarcotics police conducted its portion of the operation, but he was not sure which Pakistani forces were used, only that Pakistan contributed troops and helicopters. To the best of Arbitrio's knowledge, the troops only operated within their own borders, in accordance with the earlier agreement. Arbitrio also noted in a March 19 meeting with Msnoff that Pakistan was fairly happy with the operation, although they were disappointed that their troops did not seize any drugs. In addition, it was clear from Arbitrio's meeting earlier that day with the Pakistanis that they still mistrusted Iran, but nevertheless were looking forward to another joint operation.

19. (C) Thus far, the biggest problem discovered in the operation was that Afghanistan never reached the "operational" stage. Information was not passed from Afghanistan's Counternarcotics Ministry to the Interior Ministry so their forces stayed on the sidelines. Although Pakistani and Iranian forces were operational, their communications systems were not compatible; UNODC may request donor funding to provide compatible communications equipment so that these regional operations can be stepped up. Arbitrio on March 19 expanded on the problems the Triangular Initiative faces, noting a need to consolidate the JPC. He worried about leaks given the large number of people involved including JPC-associated personnel, DLOs, and the inclusion

UNVIE VIEN 00000117 004.2 OF 006

of UNODC on open telephone lines but noted that there was no evidence of leaked information from this operation--the gangs targeted were not sophisticated enough to have been able to take advantage of these weaknesses. Additionally, it was impossible for the JPC to be fully responsible for this operation because the Pakistani and Afghan liaison officers were not police officers, thus other "available channels" had to be used. Arbitrio believes that the appointment of permanent appropriate liaison officers would solve this problem in the future. Arbitrio told Williams that an upcoming technical meeting will more fully assess lessons learned from the operation, and UNODC hopes that a second operation will be undertaken in the coming months since the goal set at the second ministerial meeting of the Triangular Initiative was to complete two operations (subject to appropriate intelligence and conditions on the ground) before the third ministerial meeting set to take place in Islamabad, probably in June. Arbitrio found this operation illustrative of a positive trend with Iran and argued that having Iran as a regional interlocutor on drug control should present "additional opportunities."

UNODC Expresses Needs for Additional Support

¶10. (C) External Relations Officer Muki Jernelov and Arbitrio described the severe funding shortages that UNODC is facing for projects such as those associated with the Triangular Initiative. Jernelov noted that this year UNODC is facing a 75 million dollar shortfall and its Iran budget for 2010 is currently only 250,000 dollars, down from the 3.3 million dollars they have to work with this year. Without additional funding, they are afraid that the Tehran office will have to close. Arbitrio stressed UNODC's need to keep a presence in Iran, to stay operational, and to continue to be in a position to promote dialogue. In response to Williams' request for specifics on funding needs, Arbitrio said that identifying deliverables and what is needed for operational command and coordination is a priority while Jernelov noted that, in addition to the funding needs for increasing the operational capabilities of the three states in the Triangular Initiative, UNODC has a number of other initiatives and equipment needs that it will present to donors.

¶11. (C) Arbitrio also noted that they intend the Rainbow Strategy to go regional and operational, including through further development of Central Asia Regional Information Center (CARIC) and the Joint Planning Cell, which they hope will be a pilot if it goes well. These organizations should be mutually supportive, especially with Pakistan and Afghanistan as members of both. (Note: Iran was not approached for membership in CARIC because it is funded by the U.S.) On March 19, Arbitrio requested that USG officials repeat to Executive Director Costa and other high-ranking UNODC officials Williams' request for UNODC's thoughts on concrete future actions in order to decide where the U.S. is best able to and interested in contributing. He thought this would help them gain management support for work to identify additional needs for donors funding and peak interest that might help address UNODC's current funding crisis.

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Pakistan Facing Capacity-Building, Funding Needs

¶12. (C) West/Central Asia Expert Smera Rehman said that she considers the Triangular Initiative a success at the working level in terms of increasing teamwork and that UNODC is looking to expand portions of the Initiative to include India and China because of a trafficking route that crosses those countries. In response to Williams reiterating the U.S. concern about border security in the Baluchistan area, Jernelov reiterated UNODC's need for additional funding to get UNODC through the current lapse and noted that such funding could be used for precursor control and computer training to make sure that the computers recently provided are adequately utilized. Rehman noted that she was looking at possible new projects that would need funding, such as expanding judicial cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan that would include extradition agreements and capacity building in Pakistan. Williams noted that USAID has

UNVIE VIEN 00000117 005.2 OF 006

the lead on rule of law issues in Pakistan but encouraged Rehman to continue to pass on ideas to improve border security and counternarcotics to the USG, emphasizing our interest in regional approaches. Jernelov noted that UNODC is necessarily donor driven and that this sometimes stands in the way of regional projects and perspectives. Williams also noted that programs focusing on border security rather than only on counternarcotics could provide useful flexibility. Although admitting that the Anti-Narcotics Force sometimes takes credit for successes beyond its own contribution, Rehman noted that it has recently been more cooperative. She attributes part of this success to the provision of a law enforcement handbook that identifies the roles of the

different actors that not only lets them know their limits, but also has encouraged them to act by conveying a better understanding of what they are allowed and expected to do. Jernelov also noted that UNODC is hoping to expand their container control program to Dubai and that they are hoping that Dubai will pay for it. She promised to follow up with some specific proposals that would address security and other issues.

¶13. (C) Williams' meeting with UNODC Director of Operations Francis Maertens centered on Pakistan. Williams encouraged UNODC to examine its Pakistan program through an Af-Pak lens to determine if current and planned representation were coherent. The INL Bureau saw substantial needs in Pakistan for greater border security efforts, for example, to include greater interdiction capabilities. Given increased focus on border efforts, to include the recent ground-breaking counternarcotics operation under the Triangular Initiative, DCM suggested UNODC may wish to consider the signal that would be sent by downgrading its Pakistan head of mission position. Operations Deputy Bernard Frahi and later Maertens responded that they are being forced to cut 6-7 positions in Pakistan mainly as a result of the lack of general purpose funds. Although UNODC is considering downgrading the office director's position from a D-1 to a P-4/5 position, Maertens stated he has a couple of solid candidates for the position despite the downgrade. Maertens welcomed heightened U.S. interest in Pakistan, and noted that the Japanese were also interested in increasing their program funding in the country, focusing mainly on terrorism. However, he said, while Pakistan is interested in such technical assistance, it has expressed a preference for assistance that is independent of Af-Pak or the Triangular Initiative. Williams also identified money laundering as a problem that the U.S. would like to address and noted our interest in regional approaches to address drug-related money laundering which should usefully include greater efforts with the Gulf states. Maertens reiterated that UNODC estimates place the amount of money laundered through the gulf at around 3.6 billion USD. Finally, Maertens stated that Costa is interested in attending the March 31 meeting, scheduled to be held in Brussels, as a member of the Secretary General's delegation, and also having a speaking role at the event.

Getting a Hold on the Afghan Poppy Problem

¶14. (C) In a meeting with Europe, West and Central Asia Section Project Coordinator Andrea Mancini and Studies and Treaty Analysis Section Research Expert Hakan Demirkuken, Williams began by expressing concern over the message that UNODC could send if they implied that low levels of development encouraged higher levels of poppy cultivation. Mancini then turned the discussion toward eradication, arguing that eradication can be effective, but is a very expensive activity to undertake. Mancini suggested that the Afghani government should lead all eradication efforts, thus applying the 'stick' to the poppy farmers. Coupled with this, he argued that the international community (especially the U.S.) should focus more on alternative development assistance to build trust with the population. This strategy of Afghan 'stick' combined with international 'carrot' would, in Mancini's opinion, provide the best opportunity to successfully reduce poppy cultivation in Afghanistan's southern provinces.

¶15. (C) Williams noted strong USG support for efforts to control precursor chemicals because of the regional law enforcement cooperation such activities engendered. He

UNVIE VIEN 00000117 006.2 OF 006

cautioned, however, that it is important to be realistic about the likely impact of such activity-it represented an important element of a comprehensive counternarcotics effort-but was not and should not be seen as a stand-alone

silver bullet that would solve the Afghan drug problem. The USG does not view precursors as the silver bullet that can effectively kill poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Mancini agreed with Williams' assessment and noted his belief that alternative development programs should be structured with counternarcotics objectives in mind. Mancini expressed concern that without a broad-based plan of action against poppy cultivation, further efforts would lead simply to the migration of poppy cultivation from Afghanistan into Iran.

SCHULTE